Availing the liberation struggle heritage to the public: some reflections on the use of Web 2.0 technologies in archives within the East and Southern Africa Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (ESARBICA)

Francis Garaba

*Information Development* 2012 28: 22
DOI: 10.1177/0266666911424074

The online version of this article can be found at:
http://idv.sagepub.com/content/28/1/22

Published by:

SAGE

http://www.sagepublications.com

Additional services and information for *Information Development* can be found at:

Email Alerts: http://idv.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts

Subscriptions: http://idv.sagepub.com/subscriptions

Reprints: http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav

Permissions: http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav

>> Version of Record - Feb 6, 2012

What is This?
Availing the liberation struggle heritage to the public: some reflections on the use of Web 2.0 technologies in archives within the East and Southern Africa Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (ESARBICA)

Francis Garaba
Lutheran Theological Institute Library, Scottville, South Africa

Abstract
This article addresses the extent to which Web 2.0 technologies may be used to make the liberation struggle heritage available to the public in archival institutions in the East and Southern Africa Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (ESARBICA). The advent of web technologies provides a window of opportunity for archival institutions within ESARBICA to improve their public image. While social media technologies can have a transformative influence, they have to be the right technology for the right place and the right people. In addition, archivists need to find innovative strategies to use these technologies depending on what is affordable on their part and for users.

Keywords
liberation struggle heritage, East and Southern Africa Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives, ESARBICA, archives, Web 2.0 technologies, social media

Archival institutions need to complement the digitization of the liberation heritage by employing social media technologies to promote access.

Introduction
Africa waged a century-long struggle against colonialism and this heritage needs to be bequeathed to future generations for the benefit of posterity. It thus becomes a gigantic challenge to heritage institutions to ensure that they remain technologically current and relevant in these changing times. It is indisputable that the legacy of the liberation struggle is sacrosanct, hence the need for its proper documentation; but this does not have to end there as strategies have to be in place to ensure the survival of this record and its accessibility to the public, in particular for this millennial generation, the majority of whom are avid consumers of social media technologies. It is therefore not surprising that archival institutions with this liberation heritage are striving to maintain visibility on the Web by digitizing their collections. Isaacman, Lalu and Nygren (2005:56) noted recently that archivists, researchers and public intellectuals have begun a vigorous effort to preserve, digitize and disseminate on the web collections of documents on the struggles for freedom in Southern Africa.
Arguably, there is a wave of disillusionment with regard to the political integrity of the liberation movements, but the fact remains that the importance attached to this milestone remains unparalleled. The record so created was of national significance and belongs to everyone, irrespective of class, and heritage institutions should therefore engage the public in ensuring that this record is jealously guarded from generation to generation.

Harris (2011) rightly pointed out that public programming has been mostly about outreach and very little about in-reach—the public reaching in, participating in. Ngulube and Tafor (2006: 73) aptly remarked that one of the major challenges faced by archival institutions in the ESARBICA region is making archival resources available to society. The thesis of this paper is anchored in the proposition that while social media technologies can have a transformative influence, they have to be the right technology for the right place and the right people. In addition, archivists need to find innovative strategies to use these technologies depending on what is affordable on their part and for users.

The research story

A study was carried out between 2006 and 2009 in heritage institutions managing liberation struggle archives in east and southern Africa. For this study, the following research questions were pertinent:

1. Has a systematic survey been conducted to establish the location, custody, volume, composition, condition and management of liberation struggle archives?
2. Do infrastructure issues comprising policies, procedures and resources for their management exist?
3. How physically secure are the records with regard to ensuring their long-term preservation?
4. Has a preservation needs assessment been done?
5. Have the ICTs provided new opportunities for the management of the liberation struggle records?
6. How harmonious is the relationship between national archives, political parties and former liberation movements in the management of records?
7. What model can be suggested to effectively implement records and archives management programmes for the documents of these former national liberation movements?

The above research questions provided the direct link between the abstract concept of the purpose of the study and the raw data that was collected through the survey.

From the foregoing, one of the objectives of this research which primarily dovetails with the scope of this paper was to examine to what extent Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have provided new opportunities for the management of the liberation struggle records in terms of promoting access. A questionnaire and an observation and interview schedule were the research instruments used to gather data. The choice of questionnaires and observations was informed by the need to address one of the research problems, which centred on the need to establish whether ICTs have had a transformative influence in the management of liberation struggle archives. In addition, considering the geographical dispersal of the targeted population and its literacy levels in terms of expertise, the two research instruments were found appropriate. Within the context of this study, the set of specifications were the 12 national archives repositories within the east and southern African region and archival repositories housing the records of former national liberation movements within east and southern Africa. As for the former, the countries were as follows: Angola, Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The one set of specifications in the study population was the member states of East and Southern Africa Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (ESARBICA), derived from the ESARBICA website (ESARBICA 2004). The other set was the archival repositories housing the records of former national liberation movements within east and southern Africa, and the focus here was on the African National Congress struggle records and archives (seven in all), as well as on the Liberation Front of Mozambique (FRELIMO), the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), the South West African People’s Organizaition (SWAPO), the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) and the Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) archives. In total, 24 institutions were identified and the census approach was thus found appropriate.

A census involves a survey of the whole population (Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee 2006:107) and a plus factor about this approach is that it eliminates
sampling error and provides data of all units of analysis in the population. For the purpose of this study, the census approach was adopted because only 24 units of analysis were identified. Leedy (1997:211) aptly noted that it is unnecessary to sample populations that are less than 100 in number. Apart from the survey, interviews and observations were conducted in order to complement the data gathered and this use of triangulation bridged issues of reliability (trustworthiness) and validity (relevance). According to Terre Blanche and Kelly (1999:128), triangulation entails collecting material in as many different ways and from as many diverse sources as possible. It is this quality that enables researchers to ‘home in’ on a correct understanding of a phenomenon by approaching it from several different angles.

The data collection exercise took place between November 2008 and July 2009. In line with the study’s objectives, the questionnaire included questions on the following topics:

- establishing the location, custody, volume, composition, condition and management of liberation struggle archives
- examining infrastructure issues comprising policies, procedures and resources for their management
- assessing the physical security of these records to ensure their long-term preservation
- conducting preservation needs assessment
- investigating the role of ICTs in the provision of new opportunities for the management of liberation struggle records
- assessing the role of national and private archival institutions in managing these records and establishing the existing relationships between them and Government or political parties
- suggesting a model that may address records and archives issues in the management of the records.

Structured interviewing (Fontana and Frey 1994:363) refers to a situation in which an interviewer asks each respondent a series of pre-established questions with a limited set of response categories. In this regard, directors, archivists and manuscript librarians of archival institutions were interviewed. Thus it was the responsibility of the present researcher, through interviewing as a follow-up to the dispatched self-administered questionnaire, to ensure that all items on the questionnaire were considered and that respondents did not omit difficult questions. This latter fact reinforces the notion that interviews allow greater flexibility during the data collection process, as the interviewer is in control and keeps the focus of answers on the purposes of the research.

Observation involves the recording of events or circumstances in which a researcher is present (Allison 1996:26). In consequence, observation schedules or checklists were drawn to aid observation and its recording. A checklist is a list of behaviours, characteristics or other entities that a researcher is looking for (Leedy and Ormorod 2001:197). The observation schedule was administered to selected archival institutions within ESARBICA between November 2008 and July 2009. The present researcher checked whether each item on the list was observed, present or true or else not observed. The observational issues that occupied the limelight pertained to ICT applications in archival institutions, record groups, filing, storage, access and use and so on. In view of the fact that the research project touched on a number of issues, this article was primarily founded on the need to ascertain the transformative influence that ICTs have in as far as access to the liberation heritage is concerned, in terms of the use of social networking in outreach activities.

**Definition of terms**

The conclusions made in this study are based on professional literature, observations and interviews with personnel at the surveyed archival institutions. The definition of ‘national liberation movement’ has been a source of considerable disagreement among scholars. It remains subject to confusion, doubt and disagreement and even elementary questions of definition, terminology and delimitation of the field to be explained are still not settled (Valentine 1987:43). The conceptualization of the term is a matter of interpretation and Wilson (1988) rightly pointed out that defining ‘national liberation movement’ is a challenging task and argued that the label as popularly used is imprecise. For the purpose of the present work, a national liberation movement is defined as a non-governmental organization which, through violent or non-violent means, strives to win effective national independence in its crusade for emancipation.

On the other hand, Web 2.0 or social media technologies are technologically driven and designed to allow people to communicate, share information and create online communities. The coining of the term ‘Web 2.0’ has generally been attributed to Tim O’Reilly and Dale Dougherty of O’Reilly Media in
2004 (Boxen 2008: 23). The definition as given by O’Reilly (cited in Boxen 2008) is that Web 2.0 is:

the move to the Internet as platform, and an attempt to understand the rules of success on that new platform. Chief among those rules is this: Build applications that harness network effects to get better the more people use them.

Accordingly, the International Records Management Trust (IRMT 2009) noted that in a computer environment, Web 2.0 is a term used to refer to changes in the way that World Wide Web technology is used, in order to enhance creativity, information sharing and functionality in a web-based environment. Computer tools created to support Web 2.0 information sharing include social networking sites, wikis, blogs, social bookmarking, collaborative editing tools, media sharing services and syndication and notification technologies. Theimer (2010) and Kwanya, Stilwell and Underwood (2009:72) agreed that the term Web 2.0 describes a confluence of changes in Web design and functionality that resulted in fundamental differences in the ways developers and users approach the Web. Samouelian (2009: 42) also stated that the Web is moving toward a shared environment that embraces collective intelligence and participation.

Findings of the study

The findings of the research revealed some significant insights with regard to the ‘transformative’ influence of ICTs within ESARBICA and two are cited as they provide the paper’s departure point for their relevance to the subject under discussion:

- The majority of institutions were digitizing their collections though there was no written policy for managing digital records for this majority. Eight institutions (87.5%) confirmed that digitization was the most widely used preservation strategy. One trend identified during visits to two institutions was that there is a heavy reliance on donor assistance for the purchase, maintenance and development of the digitization infrastructure. The digital archive at these two institutions had an orientation towards storage, use and accessibility of audiovisual, photo, audio and electronic documents. This trend epitomized the shift from physical repositories to archives without walls—the virtual world that is. Resources were available in various information carrier formats; for audiovisual documents: motion pictures; for photo-documentation: negatives; for electronic documents: CD-R. In addition, the state-of – the-art equipment and the interactive nature of their websites were impressive. More importantly, this trend is evidence that digitization has attracted significant public and commercial funding in view of the number of digitization projects in place on African heritage material.

- The use of automated finding aids was greatly assisting in their outreach activities. Finding aids are signposts that lead researchers to the information they are seeking from or about archives. A combination of nearly all the types of finding aids including guides, indexes, catalogues, descriptive lists and inventories were prevalent in the surveyed institutions. Inventories or summary lists were the most popular. One institution was posting published guides on the Web in an effort to showcase what they had as a way of making themselves known, thereby enhancing the institution’s profile. This process is part of functional digitization, which is aimed at improving the ease of large scale access to material and is evidence of public programming; and Page-Shipp (2009:25; Mnjama 2009) argued that this was a worthwhile endeavour, considering that collections that remain sequestered provide no value, barring the few who can afford to travel to the source and overcome the resistance of collection guardians. The National Archives and Records Service of South Africa, for example, provides a web-enabled National Automated Archival Retrieval System (NAAIRS). It contains information about the collection, provides instructions on how to begin research, allows the collection to be searched and facilitates email enquiries from remote users. NAAIRS contains only information about archival material and not the actual texts of the documents and having identified relevant material, a user would still need to arrange a visit to the National Archives and Records Service to consult the documents (Ngulube and Ngoepe 2011:13).

From the foregoing, it is discernible that digitization was being carried out to enhance access and these efforts represented attempts to make the liberation struggle heritage available to the public in the long term. It could also be added that these findings attest to the fact that although ICT applications in archival
institutions with the liberation heritage were slowly making inroads, much could be done in terms of outreach by employing social networking tools to promote the profile of the institutions holding this record. However, the biggest obstacle, as will be explained later, was with affordability, hence the need for archival institutions to use these technologies depending on what is affordable on their part and for users. The potential relevance of social media technologies within the archival universe, specifically with the user in mind, is incontestable, and lends weight to the fact that engagement with the user is probably the most prevalent paradigm shift in the digital world, as correctly noted by Convery (2011: 199). Not surprisingly, the majority of the surveyed institutions were digitizing finding aids and making these available on the Web using open source software.

Discussion

The need for archivists to embrace technology so as to remain vital and essential to current and future users needs no emphasis. The foregoing findings suggest that archival institutions are moving with the times in search of relevance. Indeed the onus is upon archivists to come up with imaginative and innovative ways, not only of luring potential researchers to the institution but also of informing the public on what the institution has in store. The new technologies, if used creatively, might help dismiss the long viewed perception of archives as having an image problem. Accordingly, an assortment of terms has been used to refer to those activities in which the archival institution seeks user response to its services or in its bid to raise the profile of the organization, either internally or externally. Educational programmes, external programmes, advocacy, developmental services, public programming and public service are other synonyms used as substitutes for the broad term ‘outreach’. Outreach has been defined as those activities whereby archival institutions ensure responsiveness to users, secure user participation and promote the use of archives (Harris 2000:26).

Outreach is an extension of reference work and, as Roe (1988:218) highlighted, while the purpose of archives is to preserve and make available historical resources, that goal lacks substance if the resources remain unused. This view has been shared by Harris (2000:26) (see also Pederson 1993:306; Freeman 1984:282; Blais and Ennes 1990-91:107) who stated that public programming is arguably the clearest manifestation of archivists having embraced the notion that use is indeed the ultimate goal of all their endeavours. Considering that it is a perennial professional complaint that archivists have an image problem (Bailey 2007:123), it is imperative to develop outreach activities, inter alia, for the following reasons:

- expansion of basic archival functions through acquisition and preservation of records
- to increase and encourage the use of archival materials
- to raise awareness of archives and their holdings, as well as identifying the role and uses of records in society
- to encourage communication between archivists and the officials who allocate the resources (Roe 1988:219–220; Maher 1992:316; Williams 2006:147).

Possible outreach activity options are multiple and according to Pederson (1993:314), successful ones are characterized by a clear purpose, well defined scope and content. Ericson (1990–91:114) reinforced this view by pointing out that archives have a fundamental duty to undertake outreach projects on an ongoing basis, and the process should be clearly stated in archival mission statements, thereby, making the process one that has short and long term goals attached to it.

According to Freeman (1984:283), in developing any of these educational services we must first decide for whom we are producing them, at what level of sophistication they need to be produced and in what formats they can be supplied to the maximum number of people. Freeman (1984:283) further asserted that outreach can range at least from simple exhibits, media coverage, tours and curatorial talks to more sophisticated activity, including multilevel conferences, traveling exhibits, group instruction, teacher workshops, courses based on the archives using records as text and archivists as facilitators, or cycles of activities focused on a theme or period. From this extensive list, only major activities will be discussed and these include Internet access, exhibitions, publications, classes, seminars and workshops. More importantly, an attempt will be made to show how these can be enhanced by use of social media technologies.

Outreach and social media technologies

Theimer (2010) correctly noted that the professional discipline of archives has both an inward and an outward focus. Archivists are not only responsible for
acquiring, processing and preserving their collections but they are also responsible for ensuring that those collections are used by as many people as possible. Harris (2000) agreed and noted that use remains the archival goal of all archival endeavours. Because archives exist to be found and used, for most archivists the rise of the Internet and the World Wide Web has been a welcome means of expanding the audience for their collections. The Web is a powerful platform for promoting repositories, sharing information about collections and reaching out to potential new users (Theimer 2010) and the onset of this electronic caravan has transformed its interaction with the public.

One aspect of this transformation is remote access, as the Web has made it easy for archives to share information about collections like finding aids and collection catalogs online. Wato (2002:130) remarked that many archives today have the opportunity to design their own websites with fully interactive databases that can be interrogated online. Such databases could include the finding aids of an institution. This opportunity has enabled users to discover with ease what information an archives has and with the digitization of holdings (Theimer 2010), users can get direct access, not only to information about the records, but also to some of the actual records themselves. Theimer (2010) further noted that the traditional model, in which the archivists processed collections, produced hard-copy finding aids, and then waited for users to come to them, has transformed into archivists proactively producing and pushing out information and digitized content, trying to pull people in rather than waiting for them to show up. This reinforces Harris’s view (2011) that public programming should be about in-reach–user-centred, that is.

In consequence, it means that today’s archives must produce content for the Web–online exhibits, digitized collections, Encoded Archival Description (EAD) encoded finding aids, and possibly blogs, which are essentially online journals. Archivists must respond not only to letters and phone calls but also to reference requests received via email and online chat (Theimer 2010).

Notwithstanding, a smorgasbord of social networking tools and services is in place and these will now be looked at individually. It should be pointed out from the outset that due to the fact that many applications fall under the umbrella of Web 2.0, the list will be narrowed to a manageable size.

**Facebook**

Facebook, like blogging and wiki sites, provides an easy way to create a Web presence for an archive, and according to Theimer (2010), Facebook is currently by far the most popular among potential users of archives. Millar (2010) agreed and noted that in 2010 for instance, Facebook was hugely popular, with over 200 million active users worldwide. Archivists in many countries have created Facebook pages to disseminate information about their institution’s opening hours, address, contact information, Web site address, special events, exhibits or new acquisitions. Archivists add historical photographs to Facebook photo pages and use the tool to circulate invitations to local history talks and walking tours. Archivists can also post answers to frequently asked questions on Facebook discussion pages and use the technology to direct visitors to related web pages, historical videos, sound recordings or other information (Millar 2010).

As noted by Theimer (2010:169), most archives seem to be using Facebook groups and pages more to promote their current activities than to share information about their historical collections. This could be because of widespread nervousness over misuse of intellectual property, especially in developing countries. There is one school of thought which holds the view that schemes to digitize Africa’s heritage are a form of neo-imperial information grab in the form of digital capitalism.4 Be that as it may, there was no evidence from the data gathered that the surveyed institutions were adequately utilizing Facebook to market themselves. This state of affairs is corroborated by Ngulube and Moepe (2011:13) who noted that the National Archives and Records Service of South Africa, for instance, was found wanting when it came to reaching out to people, especially the youth (the so called digital natives) who use ICT tools in their daily lives. Considering that South Africa is an economic giant and far much better equipped with regard to ICTs within Sub-Saharan Africa, this revelation paints a sobering reflection on what could be the situation like with regard to its less equipped counterparts within the region.

**Twitter or microblogging**

Microblogging is blogging on a very small scale (Theimer 2010:121) and micro bloggers publish extremely short updates or messages. The platform provided by Twitter, a social networking service, allows users to send and read messages using their
cellular telephones. The messages, called ‘tweets’ are popularly synonymous with microblogging and archivists have begun to use Twitter, often in conjunction with Facebook, as a platform to advise their user community of news or current events. Tweets can let people know about upcoming workshops or seminars, new resources or acquisitions or changes in hours of services. Followers may then be directed to a Facebook page or to the institution’s web page for more information (Millar 2010:196). In short, tweets enable the institution to keep in touch with its established users and to reach out to new ones by promoting the archives. However, in the surveyed institutions, there was no evidence that this cellular technology was in use.

Wikipedia

A wiki is a web site that allows many people to contribute by editing content and adding pages, working collaboratively to create an information resource (Boxen 2008: 25; Theimer 2010:137). According to Millar (2010:196), Wikipedia is a web-based encyclopaedia that is developed through the interactions of thousands of people, who add and change encyclopaedia entries in order to create a dynamic, user-focused resource tool. Archivists can make great use of tools such as Wikipedia, adding information about archival collections along with links to institutional web pages, finding aids and other resources.

Millar (2010) further noted that the potential for disseminating archival information through Wikipedia is tremendous, since it allows archivists to bypass archives-specific descriptive networks entirely in their quest to inform the public about their holdings. The wikis that archives have created fall into two distinct categories based on who the primary group of contributors is expected to be. The first category is composed of wikis whose expected contributors are primarily the staff of the creating organization. The second category includes wikis for the general public. Both types of wikis are open to the public to view, and in most cases the public can contribute to either type of wiki (Theimer 2010). Friedman and Nathan (2010:2244) posited that these new information systems can be used to preserve knowledge, and that failure to capture this knowledge now will mean it will not be available to future generations when it might be of use. In the context of this paper, principles from social computing and wiki technology can thus be used to develop a ‘wikipedia’ of Southern African liberation struggles in which participants in the struggle will be encouraged to contribute rare photographs, manuscripts and oral testimonies of the life they experienced then and presently. This approach may help to unlock the crucial material in the hands of participants in the war who lack confidence in the existing modes of documenting and archiving this liberation heritage, as noted by Mazarire (2009).

As a matter of fact, archival institutions around the world are hiring ‘Wikipedians in Residence’ to help extend their outreach activities. David Ferriero, archivist of the United States, noted recently that having the permanent records of the federal government available through Wikipedia, the National Archives will be able to reach children, genealogists, educators, researchers, and members of the public who may never have come to the National Archives or seen its website to view its holdings (Connelly 2010). Wikis-in-residence are trying to help improve discoverability of content online by building a knowledge repository and they are driving home the point that collections that remain sequestered from the public serve no purpose. However, in the surveyed institutions, there was also no evidence that this cellular technology was in use. This finding was validated by Ngulube and Ngoepe (2011:13) who noted that data from their research revealed that the National Archives and Records Service of South Africa was not using cellular phone technology or social networking tools such as Facebook, blogs, podcasts, wikis, YouTube and Twitter to reach out to people.

In a nutshell, the world of archives is evolving rapidly from a physical to a virtual world, which is facilitating online access to documentary heritage stored in the form of digital data. Archivists have to keep abreast with these new technological developments to remain relevant in these changing times. When it comes to public programming, the onus is upon the archivists to devise innovative strategies and imaginative ideas that will endear the institution to the public. Wato (2002:131) correctly pointed out that archives have not traditionally been aggressive in publicizing their services. Facebook, Twitter, Wikipedia and other communications and information technologies and tools can help break down the borders between the institution and the public (Millar 2010:196). Mazikana (2011:2) echoed similar sentiments and noted that social networks such as Facebook and Twitter and websites such as Wikipedia and Wikileaks are all symbols of a rapidly changing landscape destined to change the archival landscape and the way
in which information is viewed, generated, organized and disseminated.

The very use of such high-tech tools by an archival institution is a signal to the public that the institution is not stuck in the past. Millar (2010) correctly noted that it has been argued that archival institutions can reach a different audience, that is, the younger generation, by remaining technologically current. In so doing, they can employ the various social media technologies to avail the liberation struggle heritage to these so called ‘born frees’. Harvey and Sturges (2010) noted that technological enthusiasm and trend consciousness have a large role to play in young people’s consumption of new technologies.

Noble as this idea seems to be, the situation on the ground appears gloomy for most archival institutions within ESARBICA. Mnjama (2009) noted that most archival institutions within the region are confronted with a plethora of problems that threaten the realization of this technological dream. Ngulube and Tafor (2006; Ngulube and Ngoepe 2011) rightly pointed out that many countries in sub-Saharan Africa entered the digital age at a disadvantage in terms of education and resources.

The capacity in terms of coping with ever-changing technologies is non-existent, due to budgetary handicaps and lack of staff qualified in ICTs who work in archival institutions. Not surprisingly, most of the archival institutions’ websites are not accessible, as some links do not work or lead to a dead end, are poorly constructed, not regularly updated and not easily located as some are hosted by parent organizations. As a matter of fact, inadequate infrastructure remains a major impediment to effective access to online resources in most developing countries (Watts and Ibegbulam 2006; Alemna 1999). For instance, a random visit and search of ESARBICA archival institutions on 6 June 2011 revealed that only six out of the 13 member countries had accessible websites. This assessment was corroborated by a study carried out by Ngulube and Tafor (2006) in which they confirmed that only six of the 10 website addresses they were given were accessible at the time of their study. This stagnation could be a consequence of inadequate resources, particularly when it comes to matters of funding. It can also be added that the lack of skilled manpower in ICTs was a factor and as Mazikana (2011) poignantly noted, our ability to provide and control access to information is predicated on our capacity to transform our operational foundations and modalities and to reinvent ourselves. The records managers and archivists of the future will be recruited from schools of information technology and communications.

The way forward

Cellular technology, the telephone and video screen are relatively affordable for the majority of archival institutions within ESARBICA and these need to be exploited fully in order to make the liberation heritage available to the public. Sturges and Sharma (2007:17) noted for instance that communication technology needs not be sophisticated to use in order to promote access. Growth in mobile phone usage in Sub-Saharan Africa has been explosive and now reaches more that a third of the population. Harvey and Sturges (2010:149) observed that in regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa, which has a well-documented history of inadequate communication infrastructure, the wireless feature of the cell phone is indeed very attractive. In fact, cell phones are more widely diffused in Sub-Saharan Africa than any other ICT. Harvey and Sturges (2010) further noted that the cell phone’s combination of basic, practical usability and rapid potential for advanced functionality has enabled it to surpass all other new ICTs in popularity.

The use of cellular phone applications such as tweets or short message service (SMS) is one of the most important emerging ICT applications in Africa. Mobile phone technology is versatile or multimedia, that is, as it can support other voice, image and video applications, which makes it handy for archival institutions within ESARBICA. In addition, the use of community radio stations is an important mechanism for disseminating information about the archives to the public. Following the liberalization of airwaves in most Africa countries, there has been a mushrooming of radio stations and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has provided support to a number of community radio stations in Africa.

Conclusion

Public programming can be enhanced through the use of social media technologies. The responsibility is upon the archivist to ensure that these are tailored made to suit the targeted audience, which calls for innovative and imaginative strategies shaped by the dictates of the situation. Due to its affordability and versatility, cellular technology remains the most economical means of communicating with the public, particularly for this millennial generation. By
employing this communication tool, the liberation heritage can be disseminated widely for the benefit of posterity. In addition, the digitization of this heritage which is currently underway is emblematic of the fact that archival institutions with this record are endeavouring to promote access, and they need to complement these efforts by employing the omnipresent social media technologies.

**Notes**

1. Projects to take note include:

   - Aluka Project
   - SADC project: A history of the liberation struggle in Southern Africa
   - South African Research and Archival Project (SARAP)
   - The University of Connecticut-African National Congress Partnership
   - African Archivist project at Michigan State University
   - Nordic documentation on the Liberation struggle in Southern Africa under the auspices of the Nordic African Institute and Digital Imaging South Africa (DISA).

2. This paper is drawn from a PhD study by Garaba, F. 2010, titled, An investigation into the management of the records and archives of former liberation movements in east and southern Africa held by national and private archival institutions.

3. The seven archival institutions housing ANC archives are:

   - African National Congress Archives
   - Alan Paton Centre and Struggle Archives (University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg)
   - Digital Innovation South Africa (DISA)
   - Gandhi-Luthuli Documentation Centre (University of KwaZulu-Natal, Westville)
   - Liberation Archives - University of Fort Hare
   - Nelson Mandela Foundation
   - UWC-Robben Island Mayibuye Archives


**References**


Garaba: Availing the liberation struggle heritage to the public


About the author

Dr. Francis Garaba holds a Bachelor of Arts Honours degree in history from the University of Zimbabwe, an MIS degree and a doctorate from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. He has worked for the National Archives of Zimbabwe as an archivist and at the Midlands State University in Zimbabwe as a lecturer in records and archives management. Presently he is a full time manuscript librarian at the Lutheran Theological Institute Library and does part-time lecturing work with the University of KwaZulu-Natal. His research interests include records and archives management in national liberation movements, church and sports associations. Contact: Lutheran Theological Institute Library, 29 Golf Road, Scottsville, PMB 3201, South Africa. Tel: +27 33-2606069. Cell: +27 745135910. Email: fgaraba@yahoo.com